

Rules of the Game

All About Clerics (Part Two)

By Skip Williams



We concluded last week's discussion with a basic overview of clerical spellcasting. This week, we'll consider how clerics prepare spells.

Clerics Preparing Spells

As noted last week, clerics must prepare spells ahead of time (except for spontaneous spells). Pages 179-180 in the *Player's Handbook* give the details, but arguments about how and when clerics prepare their spells abound. Here are the basics, along with a few notes to help clarify things.

- Clerics prepare spells once a day.

The cleric's deity may specify a time each day for the cleric to cast spells. If the cleric has no deity (or her deity doesn't specify a time), the cleric chooses one time each day for spell preparation. Dawn, dusk, noon, and midnight are common choices. Some deities specify several different times for spell preparation. If so, the cleric chooses one time from among those the deity makes available and must stick with the choice thereafter.

Clerics have some flexibility when it comes to preparing spells. The rules say that if something prevents the cleric from preparing spells at the usual time, the cleric can wait until a suitable opportunity for spell preparation comes. The rules don't specify exactly what constitutes being prevented from preparing spells, but here are a few thoughts on the matter.

Clerics require the same environment for spell preparation that wizards need; that is, enough peace, quiet, and comfort to allow for proper concentration. Overt distractions such as exposure to inclement weather, injury (or even a credible risk of injury, such as foes attacking), excessive noise, and the like interfere with concentration. If the proper environment isn't available, or if foes are on hand to harass the cleric, that constitutes being prevented. If, however, the proper environment is available at the usual preparation time and the cleric simply decides to skip spell preparation in favor of some other activity, the cleric hasn't been prevented from preparing spells and must wait until the next day to prepare spells. During the course of a campaign, there might be times when a cleric misses an opportunity to prepare spells and it won't be clear if the cleric was truly prevented from doing so. In such cases, it's up to the DM to decide if the cleric could reasonably have found the proper environment for spell preparation. If the DM decides the cleric skipped spell preparation voluntarily, the cleric should have to wait until the next day to prepare spells. In some cases, the DM might decide to allow the cleric to delay spell preparation if the cleric skips her usual spell preparation time to pursue some goal that furthers her deity's interests or the interests of the cleric's ethos.

Even if the cleric misses her spell preparation involuntarily, the cleric still must stop and prepare spells just as soon as the proper spell preparation environment becomes available. If the cleric skips the new opportunity, she still must wait until her usual spell preparation time the next day.

When a cleric prepares spells for the day, she can choose to change any spells she has left over from the previous day, even if a reduction in **Wisdom** has made those spells unavailable for casting (see Part One).

- Clerics don't require rest prior to preparing spells.

A cleric doesn't have to be rested before preparing spells. A cleric does have to be able to concentrate to prepare spells, however, as noted in the previous section.

- Clerics are subject to the recent casting limit rule.

When preparing spells for the day, any spell the cleric has cast during the previous 8 hours counts against the number of spells the cleric can prepare (see page 180 in the *Player's Handbook*).

This rule means that even though clerics don't require rest before spell preparation, they do best when they prepare spells at the beginning of their daily activities. For example, if the cleric prepares spells at dusk, she'd do well to arrange to start her day at dusk.

- Clerics don't have to prepare all their spells for the day at once.

When a cleric prepares spells for the day, the cleric has the option to leave some **spell slots** open, just as a wizard does. Later in the day, the cleric can stop and repeat her spell preparation to place spells in the empty slots.

In effect, the cleric stops, prays, and meditates at the usual time, and those actions make the cleric's spell slots available for the day. The cleric can fill those slots immediately or she can wait until later. See page 178 in the *Player's Handbook* for details on repeating the spell preparation.

- Clerics don't use spellbooks or personal spell lists.

Clerics choose spells to prepare from the cleric spell list when filling their regular spell slots. Clerics fill their **domain** spell slots from their domain spell lists. If a spell is on both the cleric spell list and at least one of the cleric's domain lists, the clerics can prepare the spell as either a regular spell or as a domain spell.

- A cleric's spell slot can hold a spell of its level or of a lower level.

A cleric can prepare a lower-level spell in a higher-level slot, just as any other spellcaster can. If the cleric's Wisdom score won't allow her to prepare spells in her higher-level slots, she still can use those slots for lower-level slots. For example, a 9th-level cleric has 4th-level spell slots available. If the cleric has a Wisdom score of only 13, however, she can prepare and cast up to 3rd-level spells only. She can prepare spells of 3rd level or lower in her otherwise unusable 4th-level spell slots. Although the text on page 32 in the *Player's Handbook* seems to imply that a domain spell slot can hold a spell of its own level only, there's no good reason to bar a cleric from preparing a lower-level spell from one of her domains for that slot.

Like other spellcasters, clerics also can prepare spells using metamagic feats, which make those spells use higher-level spell slots. To prepare or cast a spell modified with most metamagic feats, the cleric's Wisdom score must be at least equal to $10 +$ the spell's unmodified level. For example, a cleric with a Wisdom score of 14 can use a 5th-level spell slot to prepare a 4th-level spell modified with the *Enlarge Spell* metamagic feat (which makes the spell use a slot one level higher than normal). The *Heighten Spell* metamagic feat actually raises the spell's level, as noted in the **D&D FAQ**. To prepare or cast a spell modified with the *Heighten Spell* feat, the cleric's Wisdom score must be equal to $10 +$ the spell's

modified level.

What's Next?

That covers preparing cleric spells. Next week we'll consider spontaneous clerical domains, domain powers, and undead turning.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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